

## Newsletter | December 2023

Dear Friends,

I hope you are enjoying the holiday season with loved ones. It has been a busy and rewarding fall semester at Communities In Schools of Tennessee.

It was great to meet so many of you at the breakfast in September, and I've enjoyed visiting a number of our schools this fall. We also just kicked off a new strategic planning process. I'm proud to be working with such a dedicated team of leaders and staff to shape the future of our organization.



As you know, this past weekend deadly tornadoes hit the mid-state area. Two of our schools, Amqui Elementary and Bellshire Design Center, were in the path of the storm, while Madison and Goodlettsville Middle Schools also had families affected. Our program managers worked through the weekend to assess the immediate needs of families and coordinated with our church and community partners to mobilize and respond. Yesterday we were able to distribute supplies directly to families that were impacted.

As part of that assessment, we recognize more direct support is needed before the holidays. We have a goal to raise \$5,000 to meet immediate needs of our students and families affected by the storm in a variety of ways our team has identified. If you would like to give directly, you can [donate here](#) and add "Tornado Relief" in the designation line. The funds will be used for things like restocking fridges after extended power outage, assisting with school transportation, and purchasing household necessities.

Thank you so much for your support of Communities In Schools of Tennessee and our work with students and families across the state. If you'd like to get more involved with CISTN in 2024, we'd love to have you - just reply to this email with ideas and questions, and we will be in touch.

Sincerely,



Meredith Benton  
CEO, Communities In Schools of Tennessee



# University of Tennessee Toy Drive

A special thank you to the University of Tennessee's Institute for Public Service (IPS) for their toy drive donations! They collected and hand-distributed 600 toys for students ages 5-13 to several of our elementary schools across the state. One of the schools was Bolivar Elementary, where the Mayor, police, and fire department all showed up to help with the delivery. The Institute's toy drive helped to ensure that students who may not have otherwise received a gift will do so this holiday season.



## Stories From Our Schools

It's been a busy fall of exciting visits, family engagement events, and college acceptances at our students. Catch up on just a few of the many amazing stories here:



**Nashville SC Visit**  
Students at Ida B. Wells Elementary School were thrilled to receive a visit from Nashville Soccer Club team members this fall. The team spoke with students about the importance of getting outside to play.

Thank you, Nashville SC, for your partnership!



**Donuts with Dudes**  
Families at Bellshire Elementary School gathered for the school's second annual Donuts with Dudes event to hear from guest speakers about male strength, physical affection, and open expressions of love. And of course, to share some delicious donuts!

[Read more about Bellshire's focus on mentoring in our new annual report.](#)



**New Attendance Store**  
Shwab Elementary families shopped at the school's new attendance store at its grand opening on December 7. The store, modeled after a similar one at Warner Elementary that CIS helped launch, allows parents to shop once a month for basic needs items using "Bee Bucks" they earned by bringing their child to school.

[Learn more in this WSMV story.](#)



**Alice's Transformation**  
Four years ago, Alice, then a freshman at Coalfield High School, was too shy to talk.



**Girls on Fire Symposium**  
Female students at Jere Baxter gathered for an inspiring day of motivational



**Teacher and Staff Appreciation Lunch**  
Students in Hancock County High School's Youth



With the support of CIS, she has grown into a confident high school senior and cheer team captain with two college acceptances while coping with significant adversity and sadness.

[Read more from Alice's program manager.](#)

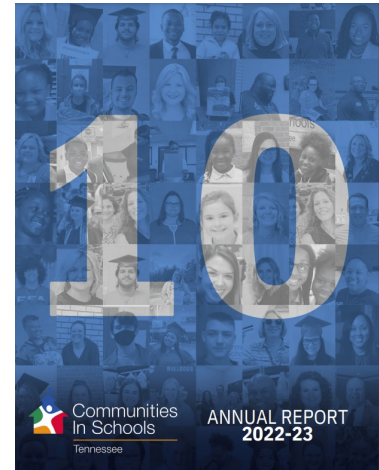
speakers and empowering education. Members of our team presented, volunteered, and collected donations for the goodie bags that each student got to take home at the end of the day.

Enrichment Program organized two teacher/staff appreciation days in November. As part of the program, students shared which member of the school system staff has had the greatest positive impact on their lives.

## 2022-23 Annual Report

Our new annual report captures a few highlights of the 2022-23 school year, including:

- Our first class of rural high school graduates who had been with CIS all four years of our rural pilot;
- A transformative all-girls volunteer and mentoring program at Hancock County High School;
- Looking back at some of our major milestones over the last decade as we celebrated our 10th Anniversary;
- Bellshire Elementary School's cultural transformation.
- Thank you to our donors, volunteers, school partners, and the many others who helped make the 2022-23 school year such a success.



[Read the Report](#)

## Partner Spotlight: Operation Warm



Thank you to **Operation Warm**, which donated 504 coats to Nashville students this winter, modeled above by students at Jere Baxter, Alex Green, and Smithson Craighead.

These new coats provide students with feelings of safety, happiness, and warmth. Having a new coat will help students decrease their number of absences during the cold months by staying warm and not falling ill. Thanks to Operation Warm, these students will be equipped for the winter season with the confidence and hope that this donation has brought to them.

## February 29, 2023: Bingo + Bourbon

# BINGO + Bourbon



## Save the Date

Enjoy a night out for a great cause while playing bingo, winning great prizes, bidding on some unique bourbon and whiskey, and most importantly, raising money to support our work with students and families across the state. Limited spots to participate in a bourbon tasting with Sinema's beverage director are available.

**February 29, 2024**  
6:30 pm at Sinema

[Tickets + Additional  
Details](#)

**We've Moved!**

**WE'VE  
MOVED**

## Our New Address

**1030 16TH AVE S  
FLOOR 2 #138  
NASHVILLE, TN 37212**



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